

Johns Hopkins University

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH BUSINESS  
ADMINISTRATOR AT A LARGE HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION:  
A PROGRAMMATIC EVALUATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH  
AND EVALUATION UNITS**

A Capstone Project Submitted to the  
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Master of Science in Research Administration

by  
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## **Abstract**

In 2017, two divisions within the Department of Research and Evaluation, at a large Healthcare Organization, underwent a decentralization which resulted in the creation and implementation of a new role, the Research Business Administrator (RBA). The RBA implementation aimed to increase focus on customer service and add more direct support to the PIs within the Organization. For this capstone project, the author examined whether the implementation of the research business administrator was efficacious. The author disseminated a survey to those who were affected by the decentralization and examined the results to determine if the implementation was successful. There were 48 responses to the survey; the survey was sent to 79 potential participants.

Responses to the survey confirmed that the implementation was successful among those who contributed responses. Nevertheless, there were significant disparities in reactions caused by RBA implementation. Such that, many believe that there was a lack of communication to the staff about the implementation, failure to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities among staff, lack of defining workflows incorporating the RBA, and overall too many overlapping initiatives being conducted concurrently. Using current literature review, the author made four recommendations that were brought about from the survey findings. These included understanding research administration infrastructures and outlining management's role under change management. The recommendations in this project serve to provide an opportunity for continuous improvement and development of the research units within the Department of Research and Evaluation at the Organization.

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### **Abbreviations**

<b>CBO</b>	Central Business Office
<b>DRA</b>	Division Research Administrator
<b>FA</b>	Financial Analyst
<b>NCURA</b>	National Council of University Research Administrators
<b>PI</b>	Principal Investigator
<b>R&amp;E</b>	Department of Research and Evaluation
<b>RA</b>	Research Administrator
<b>RBA</b>	Research Business Administrator
<b>SPA</b>	Sponsored Project Administration

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

This Capstone Project is an evaluation project designed to analyze the Research Administration infrastructure within a large Healthcare Organization (Organization). The project focused on examining the effectiveness of the implementation of the Research Business Administrator (RBA). The evaluation was accomplished through the design, distribution, and analysis of a survey to 79 staff members, who were directly impacted by the RBA implementation, within the Organization. Survey responses came from Organization research administration staff, project managers, and principal investigators. The results were used to assess whether the RBA implementation that began in 2017, addressed the concerns that had arisen out of having a completely centralized model.

In addition to assessing prevalent concerns with the previous totally centralized infrastructure, an analysis was done to examine the staff and research scientists' evaluations of the RBA implementation, whether the process of implementing the RBA was challenging, and whether these types of infrastructure changes affect job satisfaction, job stress, and organizational morale.

This project was also designed to evaluate whether the RBA implementation was successful in identifying organizational setbacks that may have existed under an entirely centralized structure. An analysis was also done to examine the approaches that the Organization took when beginning this process, and how stakeholders were identified, approached and how much buy-in was needed.

The survey, directed at those respondent groups who were affected by the restructure, was administered in June 2019; the survey consisted of 25 questions. The design of the survey was intended to evaluate the efficacy of the RBA implementation within the research and evaluation research units and to determine if the addition of the RBAs addressed the concerns of a centralized



structure, which promoted gaps and inconsistencies throughout the Department of Research and Evaluation (R&E).

This capstone project also studied and analyzed literature on various research administration infrastructures, as well as effective change management approaches. Through the examination of the literature, this capstone project sought to identify effectiveness in approaches that can be incorporated in analyzing the healthcare organization's decentralization.

### **1.1. Background**

The research portfolio within the Organization has grown at a high rate in recent years, but planning for growth has not been enough to anticipate the challenges that the Organization faces going forward. As such, more recently, the Division Research Administrators at the Organization have formed a Research Administration Optimization Committee (RAOC) to continually analyze R&E's business processes to ensure that the research staff and administrator's needs are being met.

Before RBA implementation, R&E operated under a completely centralized model of research administration. A few individuals, at the central level, provided full cradle to grave support to PIs. This led to many ambiguities and inconsistent processes among the R&E staff.

Within the last couple of years, because of the new model now used in R&E, R&E has replaced several of its leadership positions, created new roles for research administrators, rebranded existing administrator roles, developed reporting tools for streamlined reporting (among other tools), and experienced significant turnover in the process. R&E has developed committees to establish workflows that are more representative of the current infrastructure, as well as developed roles and responsibilities chart to decrease ambiguity.

### **1.1.1. The Implementation of the Research Business Administrator**

In 2016, the Department of R&E's administration was entirely centralized. After an internal evaluation and a series of workgroups that were formed, in 2017, RAOC, identified several deficiencies that stemmed from the central organizational structure. Some of these areas included:

- a) The entirely centralized system created inefficient business practices and inconsistent processes and procedures for research staff to adhere to;
- b) Post-award administration was inconsistent and at times, nonexistent, from “cradle to grave”<sup>1</sup>;
- c) Invoicing and responses to financial requests were delayed and inconsistent; and,
- d) Direct administrative support to principal investigators was minimal.

The RAOC suggested that several of these concerns might be mitigated by implementing a hybrid model for research administration consisting of both a centralized unit and decentralized units. RAO recognized that there was a need for divisional research administrators to handle the day to day administration of contracts and grants; from this need was born the research business administrator.

## **1.2. Project Questions**

A research administration survey, consisting of 25 questions, was administered June 2019. The survey was designed to evaluate whether the RBA implementation was efficacious, the implementation addressed the concerns of a centralized system, and if the implementation accomplished the Organization's goal to foster an effective and efficient research environment. The survey was sent to a specific respondent groups who were affected by the RBA implementation; the

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<sup>1</sup> The continuum of research administration is commonly referred to as “cradle to grave,” which describes the start of a research idea to the closing out of the research project

individuals within the respondent groups were provided by one of the Organization's Division Research Administrator (DRA). This specific population consisted of three respondent groups: (i) Principal Investigators, (ii) Research Administrative Support Staff: Sr. Contract and Grant Administrators (SPA), Financial Analysts (FA), Project Managers (PM), Research Business Administrators (RBA), Research Administrative Coordinators (RAC), and (iii) Division Research Administrators (DRA). The participants were selected and provided to the author by a DRA within the Organization.

Moreover, this capstone project examined whether the implementation of a divisional research business administrator was successful, by investigating the questions outlined below:

1. Did PIs feel that the research administration support staff's customer service improved because of the RBA implementation?
2. Did the research administration support staff feel supported by trainings and resources during and after RBA implementation?
3. Have processes and procedures been more streamlined since the implementation of the RBA?
4. Have processes and procedures seemed more cumbersome since the RBA implementation?
5. Were workflow charts<sup>2</sup> and revised roles and responsibilities disseminated following the implementation of the RBA?
6. Do principal investigators feel more supported in their divisions because of RBA implementation?

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<sup>2</sup> A chart outlining execution and automation of business processes: where tasks, information and documents are passed from one person to another for action according to a set of procedural rules.

### **1.3. Project Objectives**

The objective of this capstone project was to provide an analysis and recommendations to the research leadership teams, within the large healthcare organization, to determine the efficacy of the research business administrator implementation, by analyzing the results of the survey. This will in turn help identify areas of improvement and will aid the Organization with ongoing initiatives. This will allow the Organization to better position itself for capacity building and future growth in its research portfolio.

### **1.4. Significance**

Programmatic evaluations are an integral component in assessing the effectiveness of an organizational change and can be used as a basis for future improvements within the organization. Evaluations are used to determine what works and most importantly, what doesn't work. Knowing what doesn't work allows leadership to improve and strengthen their methods.

To identify if the RAOC initiatives, specifically the RBA implementation, are efficacious, an evaluation is important to analyze whether an implementation was carried out as planned and it can help with streamlining resources to focus what has been effective and improve on what hasn't.

### **1.5. Exclusions and Limitations**

The clinical trials unit was not impacted by the centralization of the research units. The clinical trials unit operates independently with the support of the central business office, and thus, did not implement the role of the research business administrator within their department. Throughout this project, data collection consisted of non-clinical trial research staff, division research administrators, and principal investigators.

Additionally, a more broadened limitation includes the lack of publications for analyses of the research infrastructure within a large healthcare organization. As such, the literature review, outlined in Chapter 2, will include literature that speaks to research infrastructures at Universities. However, the examples will be juxtaposed to the structure at the health care organization, drawing parallels where appropriate, which will aid in answering the research questions outlined in this capstone project.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Overview of Literature Review**

This chapter presents a discussion of current literature pertinent to (1) the definition and role of the research administrator, (2) the research administrator and the infrastructure, and (3) managing organizational change while supporting a growing research organization.

### **2.2. What is a Research Administrator?**

The profession of Research Administrator (RA) is one that is evolving at a rapid pace. The exponential growth of the research administrator can best be attributed to increases to the federal research budget, added federal regulations for administering research funds, and overall increased transparency for managing these types of funds. The term itself is broadly used to describe those individuals who administer awards that are extramurally funded. Extramural awards are those that are funded by external sponsors to researchers and organizations; this extramural research is awarded and supported by the external entity by issuing a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement.<sup>3</sup> By accepting one of these mechanisms, an Institution agrees to accept the terms and conditions stipulated in these award agreements. To administer these awards, a PI needs a research administrator.

A research administrator, simply put, is anyone who performs administrative maintenance, compliance review, or oversight for any given sponsored project. As funding requirements become more stringent, research becomes increasingly multi-disciplinary, and applications become more complex and competitive, there will be an increasing need for research administrators, research

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<sup>3</sup> National Institutes of Health, "Glossary & Acronym List," accessed July 19, 2019.  
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/glossary.htm#E>

administrator roles will continue to develop, and a need for continuous adaptation to changes in research policies will be prevalent.<sup>4</sup>

### **2.3. The Research Administrator and the Infrastructure**

Research Administrators are expected to not only manage extramurally funded awards, but also to enforce institutional policies and ever-changing federal regulations. If a research administrator is going to be successful in their organization, then it is the responsibility of the institution to provide and equip the RA with the tools and resources to carry out their responsibilities. Since RAs have the least control over how resources are distributed, innovation is key component to doing more with less. Maria B.J. Chun (2010) noted in her article that given considerable intellectual demands and tight deadlines, 41.3 percent of research administrators (n= 624) who completed the Research Administrator Stress Perception Survey (RASPerS) reported high work-related stress.<sup>5</sup> Sixty-six percent did not have adequate resources to complete their job in a 40-hour work week.<sup>6</sup> These difficulties are further compounded by the global economic crisis where hiring freezes and potential job loss have placed additional burdens on research administrators.<sup>7</sup>

This supports the notion that having expert research administrators is not enough; the research administrator, in order to be productive, must be supplied with the tools, including training and technology, to properly and efficiently carry out their work. Furthermore, when research administrators are properly equipped, they are able to effectively identify compliance issues as they

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<sup>4</sup> K.L. Beasley (2006). The History of Research Administration. In E. C. Kulakowski, & L. U. Chronister, Research Administration and Management (pp. 9-29). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> J. Shambrook (2012). "Comparison of stress-related factors in the 2007 and 2010 research administrator surveys (RASPerS)," Journal of Research Administration, accessed September 6, 2019.

<http://download.srainternational.org/journal/archive/JRA%20Vol%2043%20No%202%20FULL.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Maria.B.J.Chun, "Building a Research Administration Infrastructure at the Department Level," Institute of Education Sciences, accessed September 6, 2019. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ945949.pdf>

relate to institutional guidelines, as well as state and deferral mandates. Compliance is integral in protecting not only the principal investigator, but the institution as well. Otherwise, the institution opens itself up to potential risks, such as jeopardizing the reputation of the PI, institution, and future funding to both, if financial mismanagement were to occur.

The National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) provides literature on standards that institutions should adopt or mirror to foster a supportive research administration environment. NCURA mentions that the “Central-Level Standards of Effective Research Administration Operations” aims to evaluate “institutional components necessary to provide a supportive environment for the conduct of research and other support activities.”<sup>8</sup> The 24 standards listed were developed over the course of 10 years and encompass a breadth of research administration. The NCURA peer-review program is a program developed and conducted by nationally recognized RAs who assess an institution’s operation using a consistent set of standards. These standards “reflect *how* the institution integrates the sponsored programs enterprise with its institutional goals and expectations and operationalizes effective sponsored programs administration.”<sup>9</sup>

The standards are listed as reference points and are used by peer-reviewers to provide an in-depth review of an institution’s research enterprise. One notable standard entitled “Research Administration Communications” outlines how an institution must regularly and timely, communicate changing policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities, areas of risk, and overall expectations.<sup>10</sup> This information should be readily available via the institution’s website or other

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<sup>8</sup> National Council of University Research Administrators, "NCURA Central-Level Standards for Effective Research Administration Operations," NCURA, accessed September 10, 2019. <http://www.ncura.edu/InstitutionalPrograms.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



institutional platform for communicating to its staff. The timelier an institution produces communication, the more its staff will recognize what is expected of them.

## **2.4. Managing Organizational Change**

As research administration continues to grow and evolve, it seems as though the only constant within the field is change. Organizational or infrastructure change can sometimes be met with resistance. It is the way in which leadership communicates imminent change that has an impact on how the change will be met. However, it's important to understand that communication means delivering the issues at hand, and how they plan to be addressed. When change is managed poorly, it can lead to organizational change fatigue, or it can impede an organization from being able to systematically endure future organizational initiatives.

The Harvard Business review published an article entitled "Ten Reason People Resist Change;" in this article, Kanter explains how leaders should enlarge the circle of stake holders.<sup>11</sup> Affected staff should be reached and invited in some of the planning, as change can interfere with autonomy, and giving individuals a voice can give them ownership in the process. Additionally, Kanter mentions that the best thing leaders can do during change is to be honest, transparent, fast, and fair. People won't always feel comfortable with change, but discomfort can be minimized. Identifying sources of resistance and obtaining feedback from resistors can be integral in gaining acceptance for change.<sup>12</sup>

In her article, "Learning Your ABCs: Adaptability, Balance, Culture," Lowry discusses that the development and maintenance of any research administration operation is not unlike a child

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<sup>11</sup> Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Ten Reasons People Resist Change," Harvard Business Review, accessed September 15, 2019. <https://hbr.org/2012/09/ten-reasons-people-resist-change>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

learning their ABCs.<sup>13</sup> As the title suggests, there are three fundamental characteristics for managing change and carrying out effective research operations. The first characteristic, adaptability, centers on how an effective sponsored research environment is one that can adjust and change in response to rapidly occurring shifts. This flexibility and adaptability can be challenged by “lack of institutional resources provided to research administration operations.”<sup>14</sup> Lowry highlights some examples, which came about from the NCURA peer review program, that demonstrate how institutions have failed to be adaptable. Some of these include:

- not providing “additional” resources when warranted, even though management complexities are increasing and even in the midst of significantly increased and sustained volume;
- utilizing manual and time-consuming processes rather than investment in technology; and,
- lack of clear involvement from senior leadership in carrying the sponsored program message and expectations to the faculty.<sup>15</sup>

Identifying resource constraints can serve to help leadership mitigate risk and reduce impediments to research success with extramural funding.

The second characteristic, balance, focuses on being able to maintain a strong focus on facilitating research during a time of “shifting funding, increase sponsor requirements, and institutional priorities.”<sup>16</sup> Lowry suggests that growth in funding and resulting increased needs in research create imbalances between institutional functions. Specifically, when business silos that are able to operate independently, now need to deal with time-sensitive demands that come with

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<sup>13</sup> Peggy S. Lowry, “Learning Your ABCs: Adaptability, Balance, Culture,” *NCURA Magazine*, accessed September 09, 2019. <https://www.ncura.edu/Portals/0/Docs/PeerReview/LearningABCs.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

obtaining and managing research funding. The resulting product is a struggle to balance fragmentation. Fragmentation is illustrated by:

- researcher complaints over delays in business functions, such as hiring personnel or purchasing goods or equipment on grants or contracts;
- researcher complaints over delays in processing research-related agreements;
- disconnects in research administration process between department or college and central staff, evidenced through complaints and confusion voiced by everybody;
- lack of mechanisms for sponsored program operations to “hear” the researcher “voice” and use that as an indicator of changing or emerging needs; and,
- scarce or no communication between offices or people, even when located in close proximity.<sup>17</sup>

The third and final characteristic, culture, addresses how one organization can operate under multiple cultures. Each culture is accompanied by its own set of “expectations, needs, and priorities.”<sup>18</sup> The amount of cultures, depends on the key stakeholders, which for a standard research organization might include faculty (scientists), senior institutional leadership, and the sponsored programs administration culture.<sup>19</sup> By embracing external funding, these cultures will intersect, and institutional priorities will begin to shift to adjust to a growing research enterprise. However, with increased pressures, the needs, expectations, and priorities of each culture will change, and may not always be understood or align with that of another culture. Lowry suggests that this misalignment can

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

lead to “widespread distrust, increased risk, and at times loss of funding.”<sup>20</sup> When the cultures are in disharmony, some of the following is experienced:

- faculty that have little understanding or interest in understanding institutional fiscal realities;
- expectations that sponsored programs is the primary driver of increased funding;
- assumptions that faculty and senior institutional leadership are as well connected and well versed in the details of research administration (sponsor policies and requirements) as they are in their other professional responsibilities; and,
- central sponsored programs leadership and staff who conduct all assistance via e-mail with little recognition of the value of live, personal contact with faculty and their peers in other institutional offices.<sup>21</sup>

The three characteristics presented above generally represent the “highly pressurized environment” that confronts researchers, institutions, and the operations and challenges that are needed to maintain effectiveness and efficiencies during the change process.<sup>22</sup> The challenge with building a successful research administration operation, is identifying when to take a step back from daily operations, and “objectively assess where change is needed.”<sup>23</sup> Similar to learning ABCs, institutions need to identify the “language” of its environment. Proper methods for identifying when this language begins to shift, should be in place to help move and progress with the changes.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 3. Need Assessment**

This chapter discusses the individual(s) who expressed support for a programmatic evaluation of the healthcare organization's recent implementation of the Research Business Administrator.

### **3.1. Assessment of Need**

A programmatic evaluation aims to identify whether a recent implementation or change within an organization was implemented as intended, objectives were achieved as intended, and to assess areas that may potentially need improving as a result of the implementation. The assessment and evaluation process allows institutions to examine and interpret data, identify relationships, and make inferences about what is deemed successful or unsuccessful in order to establish and define best practices.

Programmatic evaluations are necessary to determine if the plan that was used to implement the new role was successful. While it may be practical to mirror a plan used at another institution, it is important to remember that institutions vary in size, scope and overall mission. As such, what worked for another institution may not prove to be meaningful at another institution. Since the implementation of the RBA, the Organization had not attempted to capture any data to formally assess how the new role impacted the divisions. A programmatic evaluation can be used to assess the outcomes of the implementation and to identify opportunities for improvement and growth for the Organization.

### **3.2. Sources Consulted to Establish the Need**

The author, a recently hired RBA, approached her manager, a divisional research administrator (DRA), with the idea of a programmatic evaluation of the recent RBA implementation. The DRA connected with senior scientists to discuss the project and to assess whether there could be

potential negative implications to the Organization and/or the Department. While the author did not work directly with specific committee members, there were several members of organizational leadership that needed to vet the project thoroughly before moving forward. These included the director of Research and Evaluation, the directors of each respective division, and the organization's DRAs.

## **Chapter 4: Project Description**

### **4.1. Discussion of Project Elements**

This chapter provides a description of the capstone project and discusses why the author decided to write about the efficacy of the implementation of the RBA role within a large healthcare organization. The aim of this project was to examine the efficacy of the implementation of the research business administrator and to provide recommendations for approaches to change for future initiatives of the organization. The author, a recently hired research business administrator, approached her manager with this capstone project to provide insight on the consensus of the RBA implementation.

Since the author had been in her new position for nine months, it was an ideal time to assess whether the RBA implementation added value to the divisions, but also, using this project as an opportunity to identify gaps that remained after implementation. The author administered a survey to personnel within the two divisions who implemented the role of the RBA. The survey was designed to determine whether the implementation was efficacious. Since the author had first-hand knowledge of working as an RBA, and received many inquiries from colleagues of “what do you do;” she wanted to explore whether those who interact with RBAs found the position meaningful, and if so, what areas weren’t addressed when implementing the role. The author examined data from the survey to answer some of these questions, and conducted a literature review to identify best practices for managing change within an organization.

## **Chapter 5. Methodology**

### **5.1. Methodology Overview**

Chapter 5 discusses the Research Administration survey design and how it was developed. The chapter starts by introducing how the survey was developed and ends with a discussion of the questions contained in the survey.

This capstone project is a descriptive case study that intended to acquire information about the effectiveness of the implementation of the research business administrator within the Department of Research and Evaluation at the Organization. The web-based Google Forms application was used to develop the questionnaire that was disseminated to collect data. The survey collected both quantitative responses, as well as open-ended responses from the Organization's staff members. Participation in the survey was voluntary and held anonymous to protect participants' confidentiality.

### **5.2. Project Design and Discussion**

The survey was sent on June 27, 2019 and accepted responses through July 11, 2019. A live link was embedded within an email that outlined who the author was, the purpose of the study, and solicited voluntary responses.

The survey targeted a specific group of individuals from the Epidemiologic and the Behavioral, Biostatistics, and Health Services Research Divisions, within the Organization. There were three respondent groups: (i) 28 Principal Investigators (ii) Research Administrative Support Staff: 4 Sr. Contract and Grant Administrators (SPA), 3 Financial Analysts (FA), 29 Project Managers (PM), 5 Research Business Administrators (RBA), 6 Research Administrative Coordinators (RAC), and (iii) 4 Division Research Administrators (DRA).

The PIs answered questions 6-11; question 11 was an open-response question that welcomed suggestions for improvement. The research administration support staff answered



questions 12-21; question 21 was an open-response question. The division research administrators answered questions 22-25; question 25 was open-response, and asked if there were any additional issues, concerns, and/or comments to raise about the RBA implementation process. Appendix I outlines the survey questionnaire. Table 1 summarizes the nature of the questions posed in the survey.

**Table 1. Overview of the Questions within the Survey**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Content Area</b>	<b>Sample Question</b>	<b>Response Properties</b>
Questions 1-5	Demographic Data	How many years have you been employed at the Organization?	Multiple choice and Yes/No questions
Questions 6-11	Questions for PIs	Are you aware of the financial and administrative staff that are assigned to you?	Linear scale ratings, multiple choice, agree/disagree statements, open-ended question
Questions 12-21	Questions for RA Support Staff	How supported did you feel by management after RBA implementation?	Linear scale ratings, multiple choice, agree/disagree statements, open-ended question
Questions 22-25	Questions for DRAs	How challenging was the process of implementing the RBA role?	Linear scale ratings, multiple choice, agree/disagree statements, open-ended question

## **Chapter 6. Project Results and Discussion**

This chapter summarizes the data obtained from each of the respondent groups, and provides an analysis of the responses.

### **6.1. Project Results**

#### **6.1.1. Demographic Section of the Survey**

The introductory questions, questions one and two, were specific demographic questions that served to gather the respondent's years of experience within the Organization and years within their current position. Due to the sample size, 48 respondents total, it was determined that these questions be left out of the results, as they are highly identifiable.

Question three asked the respondents how many hours they work weekly. This should have been directed to a specific respondent group, such as non-exempt employees; however, the author did not have this information available at the time of dissemination of the survey. Therefore, the structure of the question did not help gather meaningful data, thus, was omitted from the results.

Question four asked the respondents whether they were aware that divisional RBAs were implemented. The results of this question are summarized by figure 1. The sample size was 48 respondents; they all provided a response.

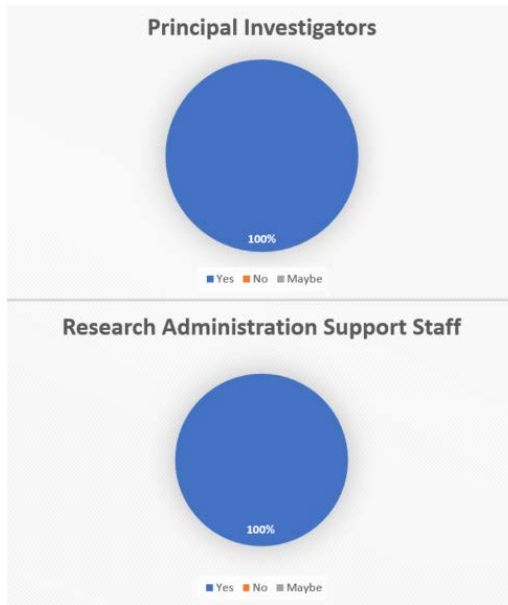


Figure 1. Awareness of R&E RBA implementation among respondent groups

100% of the respondents showed awareness about the RBA implementation. This is supported by the responses to the other sections of the survey; staff indicate how the changes implemented affected staff positively.

Question five asked the respondent's about their job title; a skip pattern was designed based on the respondent's answer to guide them to the appropriate section for the remainder of the survey.

#### 6.1.2. Principal Investigators

Question six asked about the frequency with which PIs partake in proposal submissions. The sample size was 17 PIs and all 17 participants provided a response (n=17 to 17). The responses showed 65% of the PIs submitted proposals every 2-4 months, 29% of the PIs submitted proposals once or twice a year, and 6% of PIs submitted generally multiple times a year (Figure 2). The frequency of proposals submitted within two months to two times a year (94%) represents the importance of proposal submissions to principal investigators at the Organization.

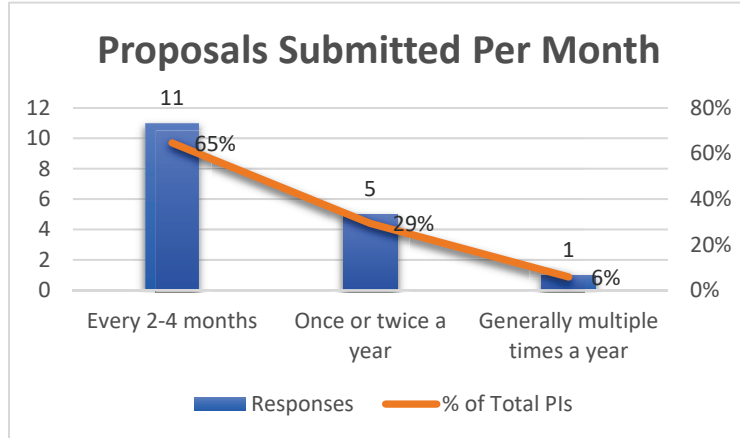


Figure 2. **Frequency of proposals submitted**

Question seven asked PIs to rate the performance, on a scale from 1-5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, of the research administration support staff before RBA implementation, and question eight asked to rate the performance of the same staff, after RBA implementation. Figures 3 and 4 summarize the performance in five categories: Professionalism, Reliability, Empathy, Responsiveness, and Customer Service. The sample size was 17, and all 17 PIs responded to the two questions. The most favorable rating provided to the RA support staff before RBA implementation was in Professionalism and Responsiveness, with 35% of the respondents affirming it was good; however, 41% of the respondents also rated both as fair.

When it comes to empathy, 47% thought it was fair, 29% thought it was good, 18% thought it was very good, and 6% thought it was poor. With regard to customer service, 53% of the respondents rated it as fair, 18% felt it was poor, and 29% agreed that it was good.

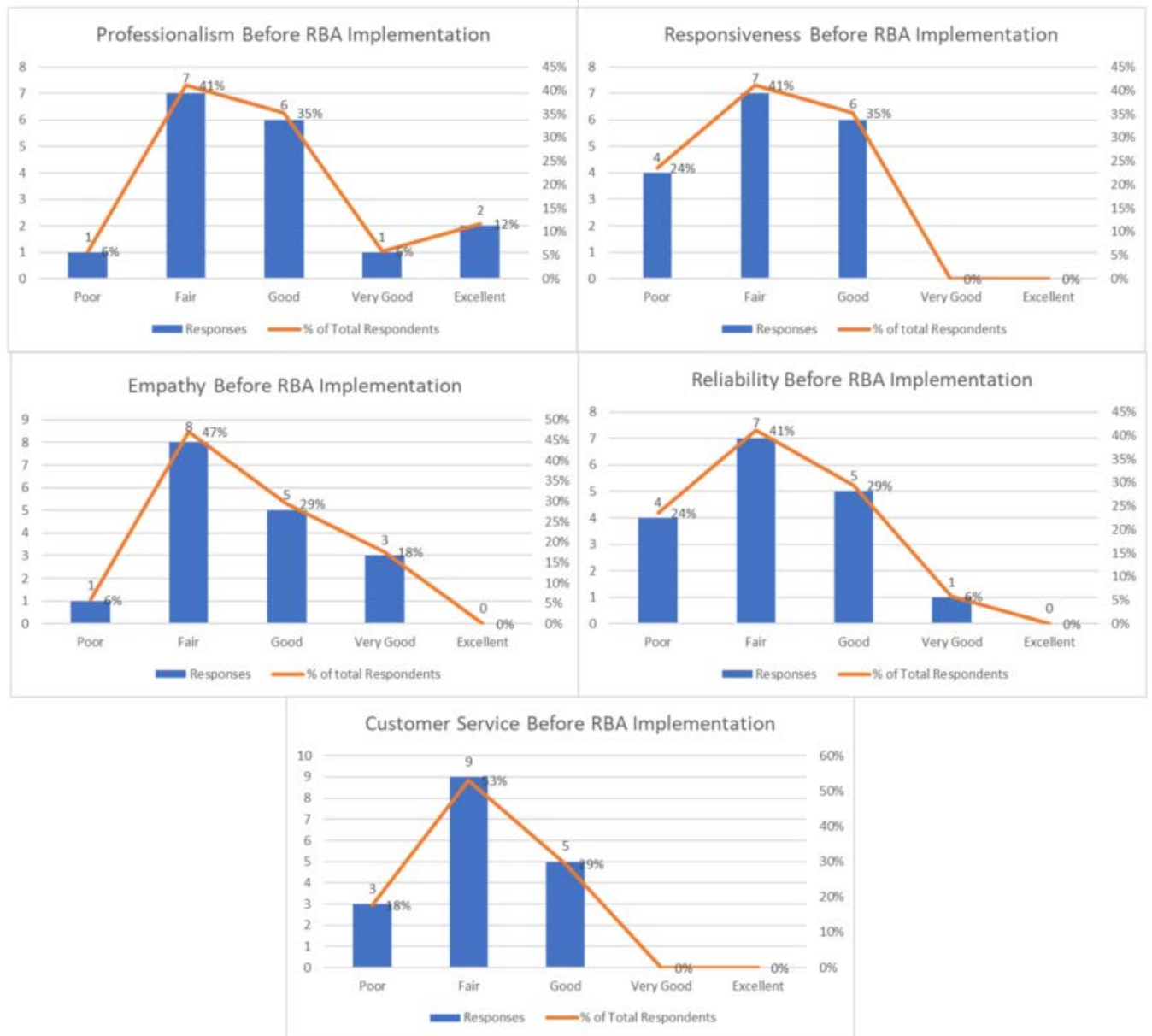
In analyzing these same performance ratings after RBA implementation, the most favorable rating was in Responsiveness with 29% rating it as excellent, 29% very good, 29% good, and only 2% rated it as fair and poor.

Professionalism was rated at 29% excellent, 24% thought it was very good, 29% agreed it was good, and 3% rated it as fair. In the category of customer service, 24% thought it was excellent, 35% affirmed it was very good, 29% agreed it was good, and 2% thought it was fair and poor.

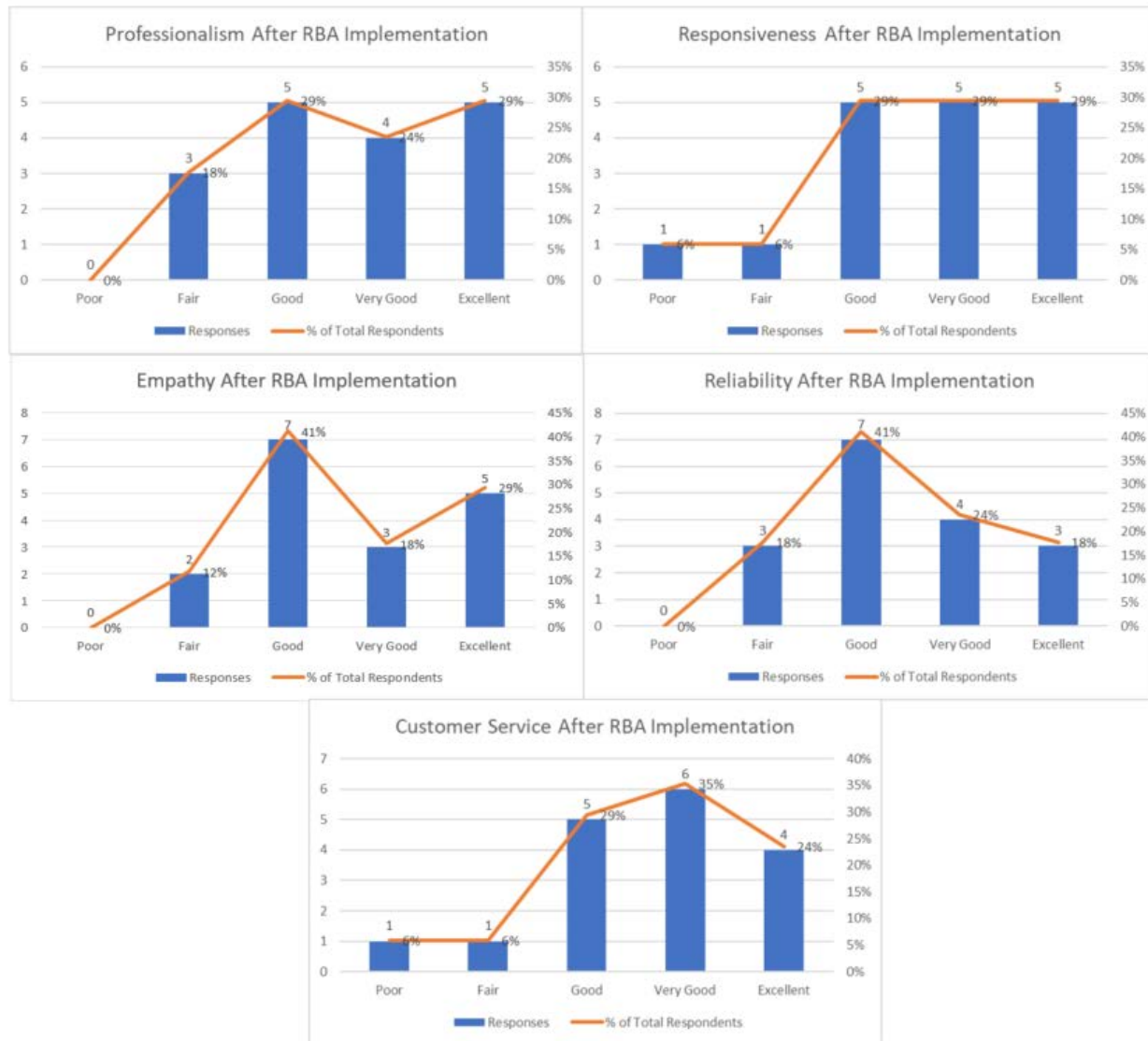
Empathy was rated by 29% excellent, 18% very good, 41% good, and 2% believed it was fair. Lastly, in analyzing reliability<sup>24</sup>, 18% thought it was excellent, 24% agreed it was very good, 41% believed it was good, and 18% affirmed it was fair.

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<sup>24</sup> Reliability refers to a person's ability to follow through on any given task.

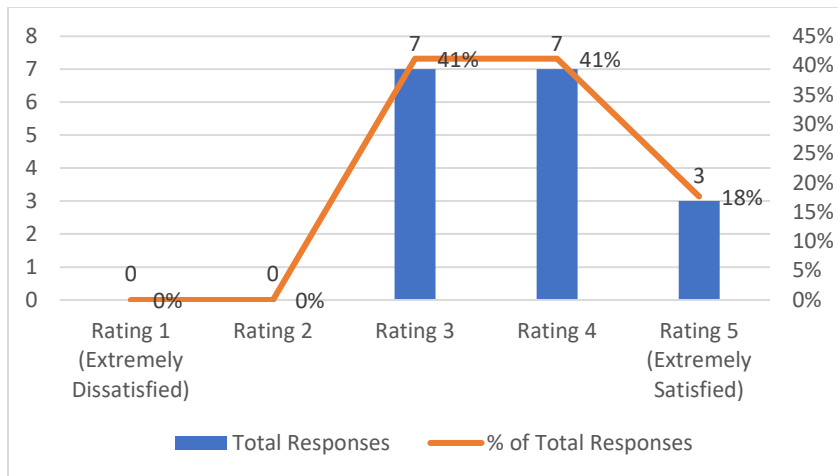


**Figure 3. The PI's rating of Research Administration Support Staff Performance Before RBA Implementation**



**Figure 4. The PI's rating of Research Administration Support Staff Performance After RBA Implementation**

Question nine asked the if the respondents were satisfied with proposal kick-off meetings on a scale from 1 to 5; 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being extremely satisfied. The 17 participants all provided responses to the questions. Figure 5 below outlines the results; the results indicated that PIs are 41% satisfied with the proposal kick-off meetings, 41% remained neutral, and 18% are extremely satisfied.



**Figure 5. Satisfaction with Proposal Kick-Off Meetings**

Question ten asked the participants if they agree or disagree with statements, as they relate to customer service and support that is provided to them by the RA staff. The sample size was 17; all 17 participants provided responses. These responses are summarized by Figure 6. Regarding whether PIs felt staff are aware of R&E’s business processes, 35% disagreed, and only 24% agreed. This reflects a strong indication that there may be some gaps in knowledge sharing, training, and perhaps professional development. With regard to short turn-around proposal submission, the consensus was favorable, as 53% agreed they felt support, and 35% strongly agreed, a strong indicator that most PIs feel supported.



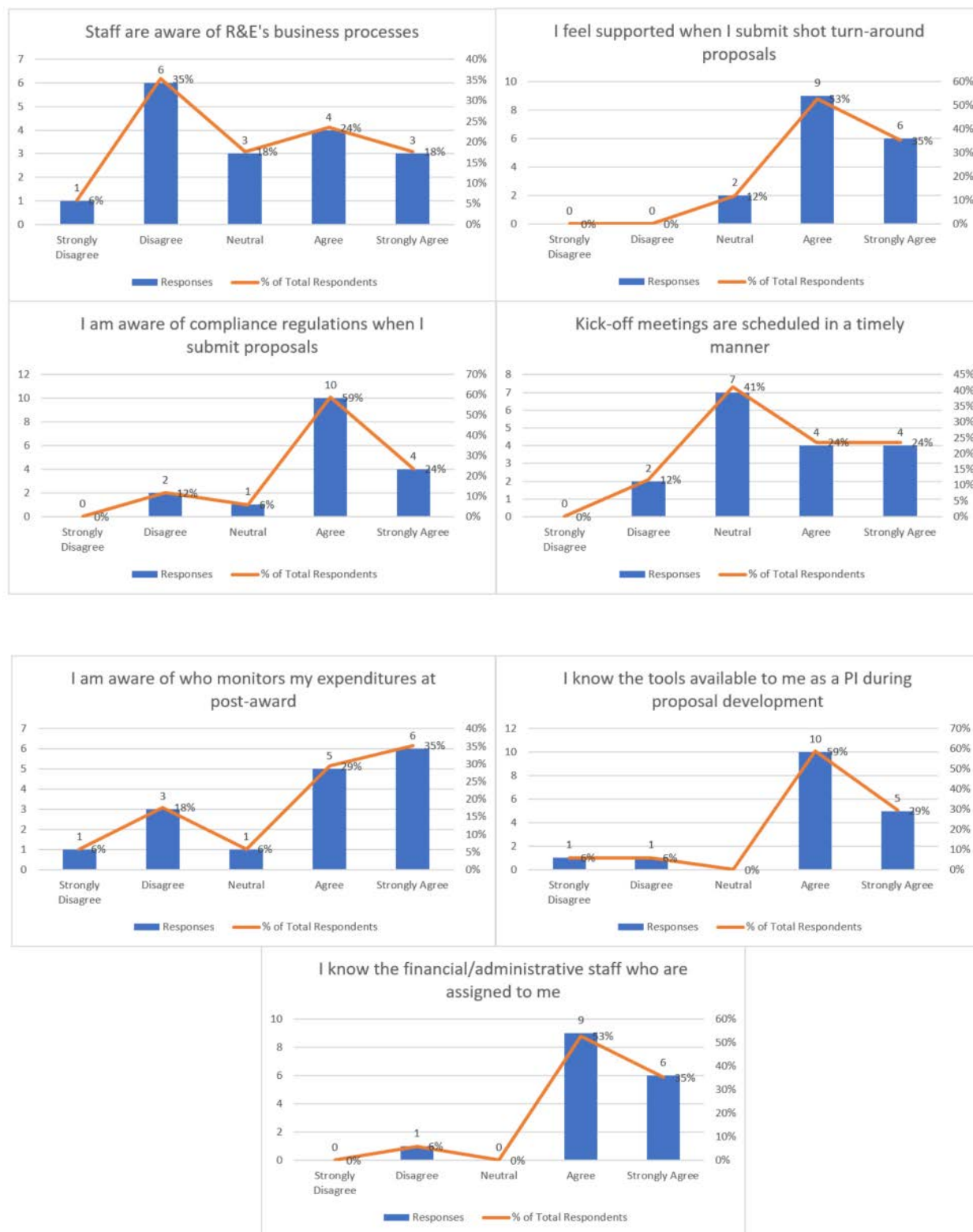


Figure 6. PI RA Support

Question 11 was an open-response that solicited suggestions for areas of improvement. 12 of the 17 (71%) participants provided meaningful responses. Figure 7 provides a breakdown of these answers.

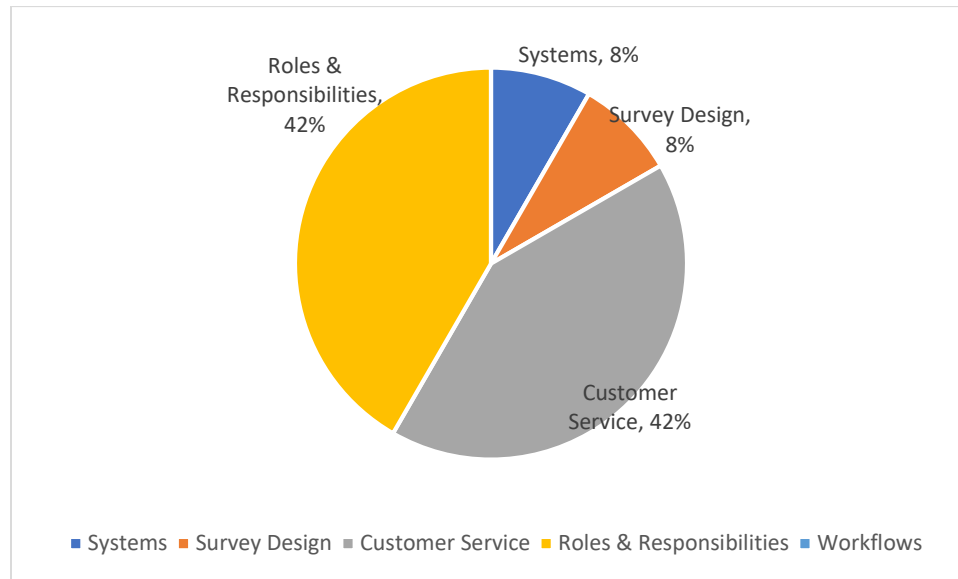


Figure 7. **Open-Response on RBA Implementation**

A recurring theme in the responses was a lack of clearly delineating roles and responsibilities (42%). The response below corroborates this assertion:

The pre-RBA period involved multiple people and systems, some of whom were better than others. Things had started to improve prior to the RBAs although with room for continued improvement. The RBAs have been a very positive addition, although the procedures and who is responsible for what does not seem entirely clear to anyone yet (perhaps because it is still being worked out).<sup>25</sup>

In addition, some PIs felt that responsibilities should be shifted to the divisions. This is demonstrated below:

We should expand the role of the RBAs and minimize the role of SPA/Finance. My experience with SPA finance has always been disappointing, however, my experience with the new RBAs has been helpful and efficient. This has been the single most useful change during my time at Organization.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Author. "Research Administration Survey." Questionnaire. 27 June. 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Respondent used the Organization's name; the response was edited for consistency

Customer service (42%) was another recurring theme. A PI commented, “Often, tasks are done with a “get it off my desk” mentality and without thoughtful consideration.”<sup>27</sup>

A couple other themes raised (8% each) included survey design and system deficiencies. The response about the survey design focused on question 8. The comment mentioned:

It is difficult to answer Q3 as written. I've seen huge changes in the way we submit grants, mostly due to the new RBA role. I love the RBAs and think they are doing great work, and I would give them all Excellent. I have not seen the same improvements in RAC, SPA, etc. Lumping them all together into one question diffuses the impact of the new RBA role and inflates the performance of the other roles.<sup>28</sup>

The comment about the systems mentioned that “the post award management system like ‘InfoEd’ can use some improvement.”<sup>29</sup>

#### **6.1.2.1. Principal Investigator Discussion**

The results for the PIs indicate that there was a favorable shift in the performance of the research administration staff after RBA implementation. For example, questions 7 and 8 asked the PIs to rate the performance of the research administration staff on a scale from 1-5 (1=poor, 5=excellent), before and after RBA implementation. Before RBA implementation 71% of the PIs rated customer service as fair or poor; after RBA implementation, 59% of the PIs rated customer service very good or excellent. Similarly, on average, 41% of the PIs, rated the research administration staff professionalism, responsiveness, empathy, and reliability as fair. After RBA implementation, these same attributes were rated as good or better by 80% of the PIs. The results indicate that the RBA implementation helped to provide more focused support to the PIs. In the open

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<sup>27</sup> Author. “Research Administration Survey.” Questionnaire. 27 June. 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

response section for the DRAs, one of the DRAs mentioned that research administrators embedded in the divisions have more accountability to the PIs and study teams. This suggests there was less accountability to the PIs under the previous structure, which may have led to PIs experiencing a lack of support.

In the open-ended feedback, 42% of PIs believed that roles and responsibilities should be clarified throughout the Organization. The Organization may consider identifying gaps between ideal roles and actual roles. They must then develop and communicate clear roles and responsibilities that align with the current state of the organization. This will help set clear expectations, reduce redundancies, and enable effective communication across the department.

Finally, question 10 asked the PIs whether they agree or disagree with statements about a series of departmental functions. One question asked whether they were aware of who monitors their post award expenditures, and another asked if they felt R&E staff were aware of business processes. There was variability in the responses to these questions. 36% of the PIs were not aware who monitored their post award expenditures, and 35% strongly agreed they knew who managed their post award expenditures. Similarly, 41% disagreed that staff were aware of R&E's business processes, but 42% agreed. The variability may be attributed to the PIs having one set of research administration staff in mind, rather than assessing the group as a whole. The results indicate that R&E may consider providing communication when processes are changed, and hold training sessions to create a platform for staff to present questions and/or feedback. The results also uphold the need for explaining roles and responsibilities more

clearly for all staff. Table 2 provides a summary of the PIs' responses to most of the questions.

**Table 2. Summary of PIs Responses**

Topic	Key Findings
RA Support Staff Performance before RBA Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 35% felt professionalism was good</li> <li>• 41% felt empathy and reliability were fair</li> <li>• 42% felt customer service and responsiveness was poor</li> </ul>
RA Support Staff Performance after RBA Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 53% felt professionalism was very good or excellent</li> <li>• 41% felt empathy and reliability were good</li> <li>• 64% felt customer service and responsiveness was very good</li> </ul>
RA Support Staff Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 88% felt supported when submitting proposals</li> <li>• 42% believe R&amp;E staff were aware of business rules</li> <li>• 88% were aware of proposal development tools, but 12% disagree or strongly disagree</li> <li>• 83% were aware of compliance regulations</li> <li>• 64% knew who monitored their post-award expenditures, but 36% were neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree</li> <li>• 88% knew the financial/administrative staff assigned to them and 6% disagree</li> </ul>
Open-ended Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 42% believed that roles and responsibilities need to be clearly identified</li> </ul>

### **6.1.3. Research Administration Staff**

This section combined responses of all research administration staff: Sr. Contract and Grant Administrators (SPA), Financial Analysts (FA), Project Managers (PM), Research Business Administrators (RBA), Research Administrative Coordinators (RAC). There were 29 participants; all 29 provided responses. Question 12 asked the participants about their satisfaction level with the RBA implementation on a scale from 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being extremely satisfied. The results of the responses are outlined in Figure 8. 34% of the responses affirmed a rating of extremely

satisfied; 31% agreed on Rating 4, which indicates a favorable response to the implementation since more than half (65%) of the respondents were satisfied.

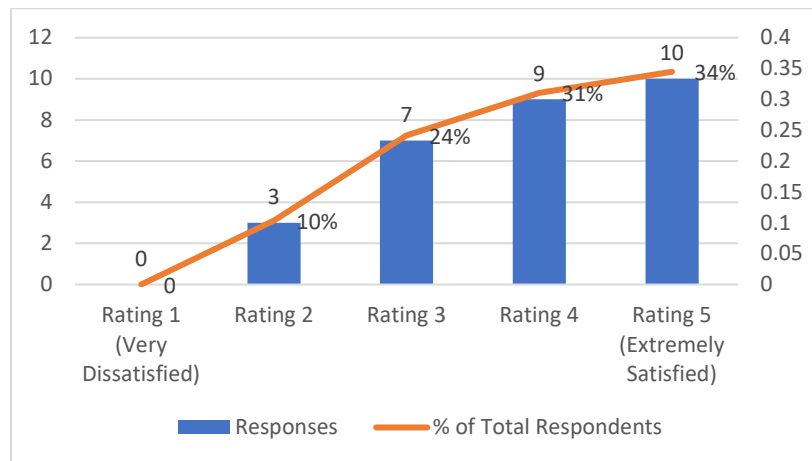


Figure 8. **Satisfaction of RBA Implementation**

Question 13 asked the respondents how challenging the transition was to work with or as a research business administrator. All 29 participants provided responses. Figure 9 outlines the results, highlighting that 41% agreed that the transition was not challenging at all.

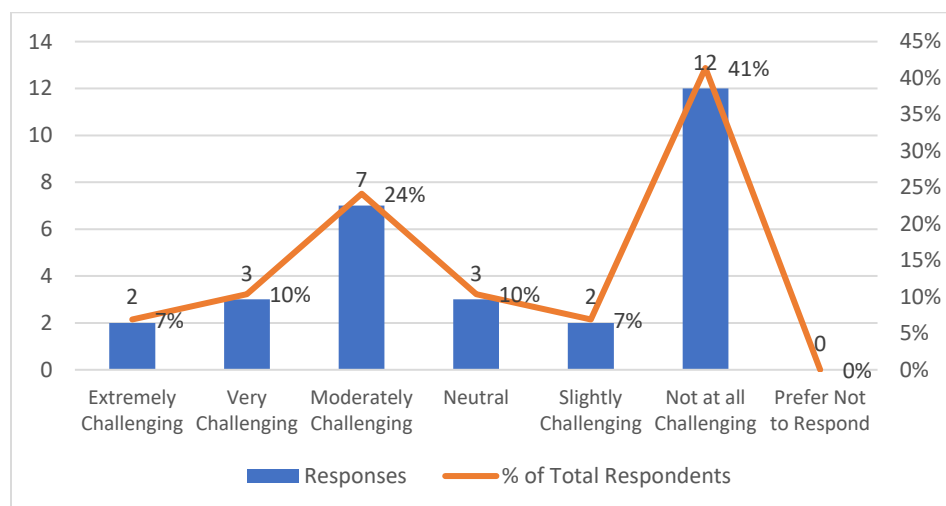


Figure 9. **RBA Transition Challenge**

Question 14 asked the respondents whether there was any change in their workload after the RBA implementation. All 29 participants provided responses; Figure 10 illustrates the responses, reflecting that 45% felt their workload either decreased or stayed the same.

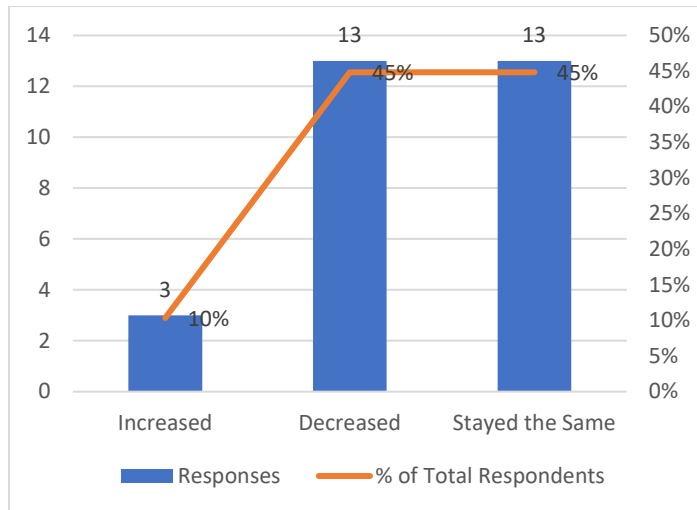


Figure 10. **Workload Change**

Question 15 asked the respondents if workflows were provided after the implementation of the RBA. All 29 participants responded; Figure 11 illustrates these results. 38% of the respondents indicated that there were no workflow charts provided, but that some training materials were provided.

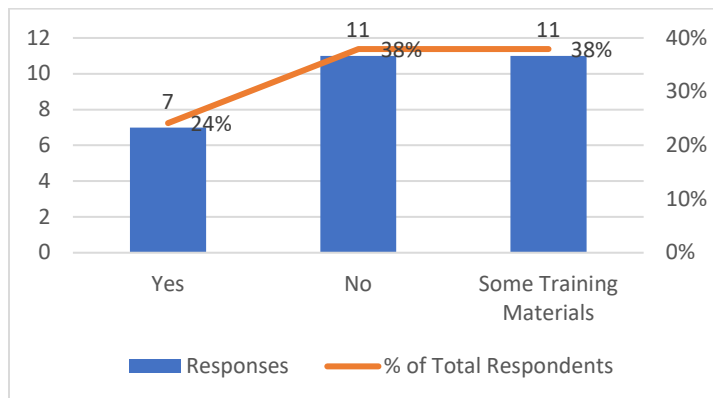


Figure 11. **Workflows**

Questions 16 and 17 asked the respondents to rate the degree of support before and after RBA implementation, respectively. All 29 participants responded to both questions; Figures 12 and 13 outline the results. 38% of the respondents felt they were somewhat supported before RBA implementation and 41% of the respondents felt they were somewhat supported after the implementation. 24% of the respondents remained neutral on addressing support before implementation and 21% remained neutral after implementation. The total responses lean toward a favorable outcome, with responses moving from less favorable to more favorable.

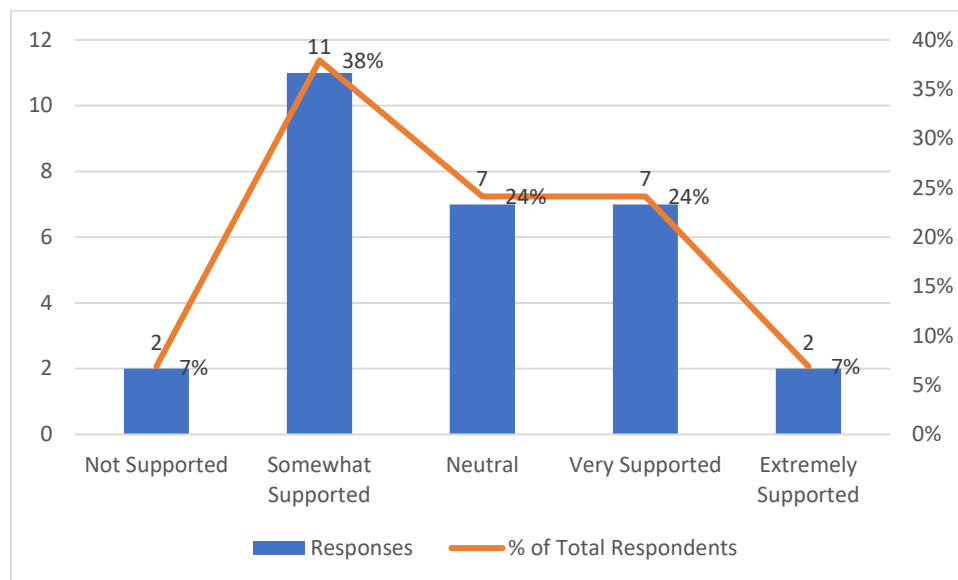
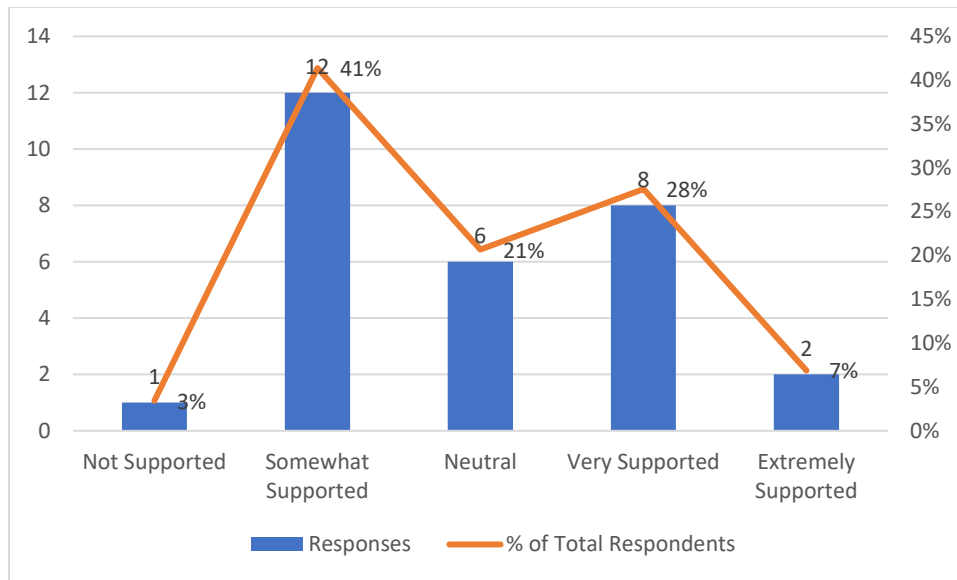


Figure 12. **Support Before RBA Implementation**





**Figure 13. Support After RBA Implementation**

Question 18 asked the respondents to agree or disagree with a series of statements concerning their job responsibilities. Figure 14 illustrates the responses of all 29 respondents.

To summarize, 34% of the respondents felt that roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined for their position; 28% remained neutral, 28% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed. 69% agreed they felt like experts in their area, and 28% and 3% remained neutral or disagreed, respectively. When asked if they know whom to seek guidance from if they have questions, 79% strongly agreed, 17% responded neutral, and 3% strongly disagreed. With regard to balanced workload distribution, 7% preferred not to respond, 14% strongly agreed, 38% indicated neutrality, 31% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed. Lastly, when asked if they were confident their back-up could support them while they were out, 48% strongly agreed, while 31% were neutral, 17% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed.

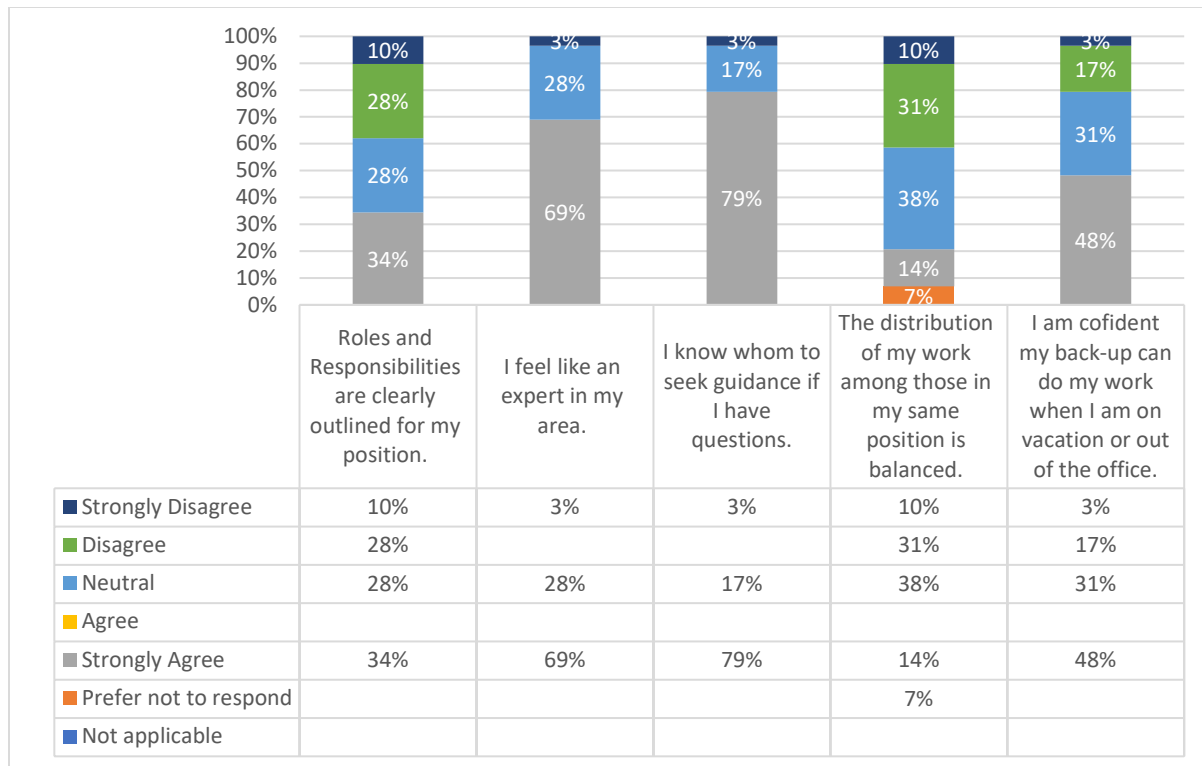


Figure 14. **RA Responsibilities**

Question 19 asked the respondents whether they felt they were supervised an adequate amount, too little, or too much. All 29 respondents provided responses to the question; this is illustrated in Figure 15. 83% of the respondents agreed that they are supervised the right amount, only 10% stated that they are supervised too little, and the remaining 6% of the respondents indicated supervision was somewhat too much, or preferred not to respond.

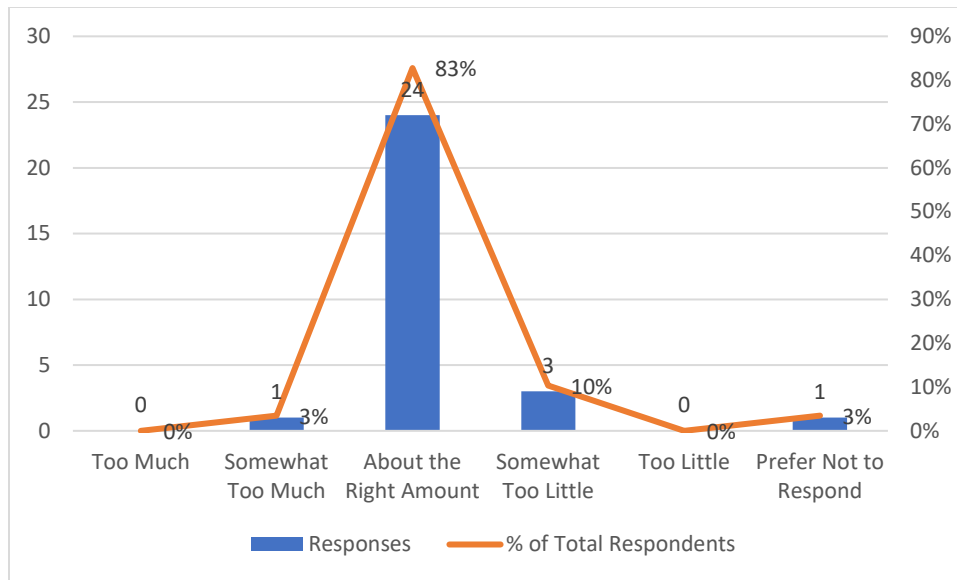


Figure 15. **Amount of Supervision**

Question 20 requested that the respondents rate on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, their occupation skills. 8 skills were outlined and are illustrated by Figure 16; all 29 participants provided responses.

In summary, the respondents rated themselves highly; with at least 80-90% of the respondents agreeing that their skills were either excellent or very good. The lowest rating was for knowledge of rules and regulations, where 6% felt that they were fair or poor.

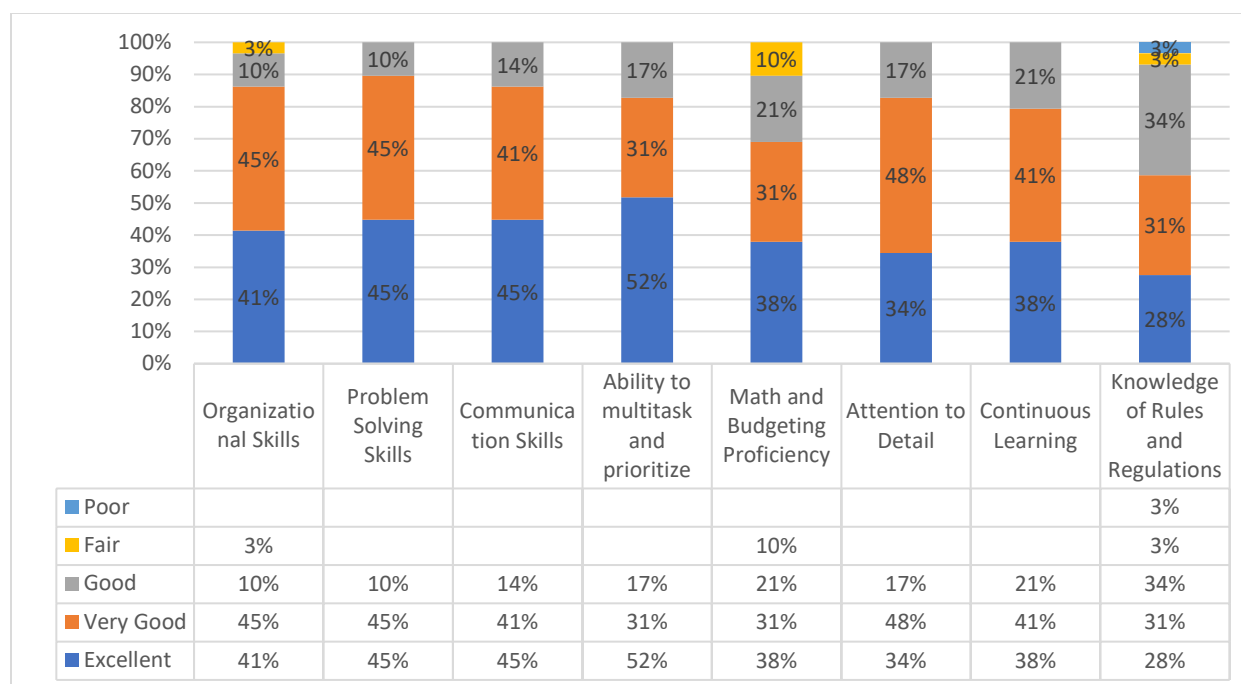


Figure 16. **RA Professional Skills**

Lastly, the final question was open-ended and asked if there were any additional issues/concerns/comments that they'd like to raise. 12 of the 29 respondents provided a response. Four of the respondents indicated that while RBA implementation has been effective, it has also been confusing. One respondent stated:

It is unclear how the roles and responsibilities are divided among the SPA and RBA. I feel that the roles and responsibilities are redundant and/or confusing. I feel that I'm doing the same amount of work with the RBAs on-board. I'm optimistic however that once everyone is on the same page, things will get better.<sup>30</sup>

While there is apparent optimism, there is a strong sense that because roles and responsibilities have not been rolled out, there are unclear expectations, and thus, cause duplicate efforts, resulting in inefficiencies. This is corroborated by what this respondent added:

Expectations between CBO and Divisional RBAs needs to be clearly defined. Leadership should enforce service level commitments in order to limit redundancies between these

<sup>30</sup> Author. "Research Administration Survey." Questionnaire. 27 June. 2019.

parties and foster productivity/efficiencies. Often times there are overlap in efforts as those expectations are ambiguous and even when it is clear that those duties fall outside the scope of an RBAs role and responsibilities, they tend out of necessity to supplement CBO duties due to poor service standards. It is apparent that there is contention due to the new organizational structure that could be addressed through change management, organizational culture, and communication trainings. This could help build rapport and moral between incumbents that experienced the reorganization and help those newly transitioning into their roles within a rapidly evolving organization.<sup>31</sup>

#### **6.1.3.1. Research Administration Staff Discussion**

The research administration staff was asked how satisfied they were with the RBA implementation, and were asked to rate the level of difficulty the transition was. 89% of the staff were satisfied with the implementation, but 41% felt that the transition was accompanied with some challenges.

The research administration staff was asked whether the distribution of work among others in their same position is balanced, 41% of the respondents disagreed about the work being balance, 38% were neutral, 7% preferred not to respond, and only 14% agreed. Due to the many changing facets of research administration, doing more with less can create disparities in workloads across an organization. For these reasons, it's imperative that staff possess strong time management and organizational skills, as well as being able to manage competing demands and delegate when needed. Similarly, additional burdens are placed on staff when they don't have adequate support for when they are out of the office. More than half of the research administration staff indicated that they are not confident their back up can do their work when they are out of the office. This could potentially lead to staff feeling over worked. Further discussions regarding workload distribution among staff are warranted at the Organization.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

The staff was asked to rate the level of support provided by management before and after RBA implementation. 38% felt somewhat supported before RBA implementation and 41% felt somewhat supported after RBA implementation. The results show that there was a slight increase in the number of employees who feel supported. In the open response, 25% of employees felt there was little to no communication about the RBA implementation, and 25% felt that the staff do not have the proper tools to carry out their work. Support from management can take on many forms. Expressing support to staff is different from equipping staff with the proper knowledge and resources to meet the expectations set by the Organization. The Organization should discuss further about the level of support throughout the Department.

The research administration support staff was asked to rate their professional skills; the lowest ratings were in knowledge of rules and regulations (10%) and math and budgeting proficiency (10%). The Divisions might consider offering quarterly refresher courses to the staff to target those individuals who feel less proficient in areas integral to their positions. With the implementation of the new role, it's important for information to be disseminated consistently and frequently to ensure everyone is in agreement with expectations. Further discussions are warranted about the volume and quality of trainings within the Department. Table 3 outlines the RA support staff's responses.

**Table 3. Summary of SPA, FA, RBA, RAC, PM/PC Responses**

Topic	Key Findings
Satisfaction with RBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>89% of RA support staff were satisfied with the RBA</li> </ul>

Implementation	implementation
Challenges with RBA implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 41% felt the transition to working with an RBA was not at all challenging</li> <li>• 41% felt there were some challenges with the transition</li> </ul>
Workload Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45% felt their workload decreased</li> <li>• 45% felt their workload stayed the same</li> </ul>
Workflows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38% felt there were no new workflows available after RBA implementation</li> </ul>
Support from Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38% felt somewhat supported before RBA implementation</li> <li>• 31% were neutral or did not feel supported before implementation</li> <li>• 41% felt somewhat supported after RBA implementation</li> <li>• 24% were neutral or did not feel supported after implementation</li> </ul>
Job Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 66% were neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree that roles and responsibilities were clearly outlined for their positions</li> <li>• 69% felt like an expert in their area</li> <li>• 79% knew whom to turn to for questions</li> <li>• 79% were neutral or disagree about whether the distribution of work is balanced among those in their same position</li> <li>• 51% were neutral or disagree about how confident they are that their back-ups can do their jobs</li> </ul>
Amount of Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 83% felt they were supervised the right amount</li> </ul>
Rating Professional Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The highest rating was for ability to multitask and prioritize at 52%</li> <li>• The average rating was at 41% was for organizational skills, continuous learning, attention to detail, and problem-solving skills</li> <li>• The lowest rating was 10% for knowledge of rules and regulations and math and budgeting proficiency</li> </ul>
Open-ended Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% felt that there was little to no communication about the new role</li> <li>• 25% felt that the RA staff don't have the proper tools to carry out their jobs</li> <li>• 50% felt roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined</li> </ul>

#### **6.1.4. Division Research Administrators**

Two of the four DRAs responded to the survey. When asked if they felt their unit feels supported during peak and time-sensitive periods, 100% agreed. The DRAs were asked if they were comfortable with the amount of direct reports; 50% answered neutral and 50% preferred not to respond. When asked if they felt their unit can trust them as their manager, 100% agreed. 100% of the respondents agreed that the RBA implementation was a very challenging process. Finally, the last question was an open-response, that provided positive feedback for the overall RBA implementation.

RBA implementation has been successful because of the caliber of employees who were hired to fill those roles. The customer service has also improved because of these employees and the structure. Employees embedded in Divisions are more accountable to the PIs and the project teams. The employees can also customize their service to the PIs' expectations. If there are challenges among RBAs, RACs, PIs, and study teams, the issues can be resolved between these groups in a timely manner. The RBAs are also effective liaisons with the Central Business Office.<sup>32</sup>

The DRAs all agreed their units feel supported during time-sensitive deadlines. The results demonstrated that, while very challenging, the DRAs viewed the implementation favorably. One of the goals of the implementation was to provide more focused support to its internal clients, and the results show that the DRAs agree that customer service has improved since the implementation of the role. Further, while the RBA implementation did not aim to reduce the amount of direct reports for the DRAs, half remained neutral and the other half preferred not to respond. This may be an area that can be further explored. Largely, the DRAs expressed complete satisfaction with the implementation of the RBA role; Table 4 outlines the DRA responses to most of the questions posed.

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<sup>32</sup> Author. "Research Administration Survey." Questionnaire. 27 June. 2019.



**Table 4. Summary of DRA Responses**

Topic	Key Findings
Units Feel Supported at Time-Sensitive Deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All agree</li> </ul>
Streamlined Business Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% strongly agree, 50% were neutral</li> </ul>
Comfortable with the amount of Direct Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% were neutral, 50% preferred not to respond</li> </ul>
Overall Satisfaction of RBA implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% were satisfied</li> </ul>
Open-ended Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% believed that RBAs are effective liaisons with the central business office</li> <li>• 100% believed that the implementation of the RBA role has helped improve customer service throughout the divisions</li> </ul>

## **Chapter 7. Recommendations and Discussion**

### **7.1. Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the pertinent findings across all respondent groups, and provides recommendations, where applicable. The chapter concludes by analyzing whether the RBA implementation was efficacious based on the survey results.

### **7.2. Recommendations**

Chapter 7 focuses on findings that were endorsed by <50% of the respondents. These are discussed below, and the corresponding recommendations are listed before each finding.

**Recommendation 1: An in-depth evaluation of the Organization's roles and responsibilities should be conducted.**

The Organization should conduct the evaluation to not only disseminate revised roles and responsibilities, but also, to identify disparities in workload distribution. A clear outline and explanation of roles and responsibilities would prove to be invaluable to the Organization's staff. As discussed in the literature in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.), it's imperative that institutions provide clear and accurate roles and responsibilities, so staff can know what is expected of them, specifically when new roles are implemented. When directives and roles are unclear, a disconnect can be created between the Organization and the employee. This was clearly supported by respondents replies wherein:

- 1)** 66% of the RA staff were neutral, disagree, or strongly disagreed that roles and responsibilities were clearly outlined for their positions; and
- 2)** 79% of the RA staff were neutral or disagreed about whether the distribution of work is balanced among those in their same position.

**Recommendation 2: The Organization should evaluate the way in which changes are communicated to its staff to help keep professional objectives clear.**

In the open-ended portions of the survey, several opinions were voiced, from the PIs and the research administration staff about a lack of clear roles and responsibilities, but also mentioned that there was no introduction to the RBAs, and then “all of a sudden” the RBAs started to take on items that used to be handled by the SPA team. This was clearly supported in the fact that 25% of the RA staff felt that there was little to no communication about the new role

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the literature reviewed discussed the NCURA standards (section 2.3) as they relate to “Research Administration Communications.” This standard outlines how an institution must establish timely, regular communication, such as “policies and procedures, expectations, roles and responsibilities, changes in policies, and risk areas.”<sup>33</sup> While there are indicators that this has been done within the Organization, the survey seems to propose that additional communication, specifically relating to the implementation of the RBA role, revised roles and responsibilities, and organizational expectations, should be communicated regularly and clearly.

**Recommendation 3: The Organization should implement training programs and conduct quarterly refreshers to eliminate gaps in performance.**

The findings suggest a pattern that the research administration staff could benefit from more organizational trainings and/or personalized training opportunities. With the implementation of the new role, an organization should want to ensure that its staff members have the proper resources to carry out their role. Providing training, adequate resources, and developmental opportunities, is

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<sup>33</sup> National Council of University Research Administrators, "NCURA Central-Level Standards for Effective Research Administration Operations," NCURA, accessed September 10, 2019. <http://www.ncura.edu/InstitutionalPrograms.aspx>.

essential to the success of an organization. Consistent training creates an overall knowledgeable staff who are prepared to cover for one another as needed. This was clearly supported by respondents replies wherein:

- 1) 42% of PIs believe R&E staff were aware of business rules;
- 2) 25% felt that the RA staff don't have the proper tools to carry out their jobs;
- 3) 51% of the RA staff were neutral or disagree about how confident they are that their back-ups can do their jobs; and,
- 4) The RA staff lowest rating for professional skills was 10% for knowledge of rules and regulations and math and budgeting proficiency.

**Recommendation 4: With increased growth and changes, the Organization should evaluate their current organizational structure to ensure it aligns with its goals.**

While this capstone project did not aim to examine the amount of direct reports, the results show this may be an area that can be further investigated by the Organization. If at present there is an indication that management may have too many direct reports, the addition of the RBAs would have only added to that population. Therefore, when adding new roles to an organization, it's important to evaluate the current management structure to identify whether it aligns with where the organization wants to be. This was clearly supported by respondents replies where when asked if they felt they were comfortable with the number of direct reports, 50% of the DRAs were neutral and 50% preferred not to respond

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

The aim of the RBA implementation within the divisions was to move away from a completely centralized model. The decentralization would allow for more consistent practices, with a stronger customer service focus of support for the PIs, as well as a more streamlined approach to sponsored project portfolio management. The decentralization demonstrated that inserting a research administrator at the department level can bridge gaps in communication, increase customer service, and provide better direct support to the principal investigators and the study teams.

The divisional research business administrator implementation was largely a success; however, there were varied reactions to certain components of the implementation, such as lack of communication about the new role and how the RBA would contribute to the Organization, revised roles and responsibilities, and lack of resources to successfully meet organizational expectations.

The RBA implementation increased direct support to the principal investigators, which in turn addressed some of the concerns surrounding customer service within the Organization. The RBA's helped to mitigate the disconnect between the SPA team and the divisions. The DRAs felt that the RBA implementation contributed to increased streamlined business practices and effective liaising between the different divisions within the Organization.

The Organization's resilience to change was tested throughout the implementation; however, the culture of the Organization proved capable of adapting to change. While implementations do not come without challenges, the recommendations obtained in this capstone project can, hopefully, provide a framework for future initiatives to enhance the research and its administration within the Organization.

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## Appendix 1: Original Survey Questions

### Research Administration Survey

I am Jacqueline Godoy, a current graduate student in the Masters of Science Program in Research Administration at Johns Hopkins University. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Your response to the questionnaire will be anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any time. After collecting the survey responses, the data will be analyzed and reported without disclosing any sensitive or identifiable information about the participants of this survey. Collection of this data is important to me, as this data is a part of my graduate capstone project and is needed for me to graduate. The deadline to complete the survey is July 11, 2019. Your time and feedback are greatly appreciated.

My capstone project, once completed and accepted, will be available in JScholarship. It will also help the Research Administration Optimization efforts by providing feedback on recent changes within the organization. Your completion of this survey will serve as your consent to be in this research study. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact my adviser at Johns Hopkins, Dr. Marianne Woods, Director of the M.S. program in Research Administration, at [mwoods9@jhu.edu](mailto:mwoods9@jhu.edu). Thank you in advance for your participation in this survey.

\* Required

### Demographic Questions

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**1. How many years have you been employed at Kaiser Permanente, SCPMG?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-9 years
- ☐ 10 years or more

**2. How many years have you been in your current position? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-9 years
- ☐ 10 years or more

**3. How many hours do you work weekly? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 20 hours or less
- ☐ 21-39 hours per week
- ☐ 40 or more hours per week
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Were you aware that R&E implemented the research business administrator role (RBA)? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

**5. What is your current job title? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Contract and Grant Administrator *Skip to question 12.*
- ☐ Financial Analyst *Skip to question 12.*
- ☐ Research Business Administrator *Skip to question 12.*
- ☐ Research Administrative Coordinator *Skip to question 12.*
- ☐ Project Manager/Project Coordinator *Skip to question 12.*
- ☐ Division Research Administrator *Skip to question 22.*
- ☐ Principal Investigator *Skip to question 6.*

## Principal Investigators

**6. How frequently do you submit proposals? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Every month
- ☐ Every 2-4 months
- ☐ Once or twice a year
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate the overall performance of the Research Administrators (SPA, FAs, RAA) before RBA implementation? \***

*Mark only one oval per row.*

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Professionalism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reliability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Empathy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customer Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



8. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate the overall performance of the Research Administrators (SPA, FA, RBA, RAC) after the RBA implementation? \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Professionalism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reliability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Empathy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customer Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Please rate how satisfied you are overall with proposal kick-off meetings? \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely Satisfied

10. Please indicate whether you agree with each of these statements: \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Staff are aware of R&E's business processes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel support when I submit short turn-around proposals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of compliance regulations when I submit proposals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kick-off meetings are scheduled in a timely manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware of who monitors my expenditures at post-award.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the tools available to me as a PI during proposal development (e.g. templates, boilerplate language)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the financial/administrative staff that are assigned to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Do you have any suggestions for improvement? \*

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Stop filling out this form.

**Research Administration Staff (CGA, Sr., FA, PM, RBA, RAC)**

**12. Please rate how satisfied you are with RBA implementation. \***

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely Satisfied

**13. How challenging was the transition to working with/as an RBA? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Extremely challenging
- ☐ Very challenging
- ☐ Moderately challenging
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Slightly challenging
- ☐ Not at all challenging
- ☐ Prefer not to respond

**14. How did your workload change with the implementation of the RBA role? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Increased
- ☐ Decreased
- ☐ Stayed the same

**15. Were workflows available after the role of the RBA was implemented? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Some training materials

**16. How supported did you feel by management throughout the transition/implementation of the RBA? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Not supported
- ☐ Somewhat supported
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Very supported
- ☐ Extremely supported

**17. How supported did you feel by management after RBA implementation? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Not supported
- ☐ Somewhat supported
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Very supported
- ☐ Extremely supported

**18. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of these statements: \***

*Mark only one oval per row.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to Respond
Roles and Responsibilities are clearly outlined for my position.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like an expert in my area.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know whom to seek guidance if I have questions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The distribution of my work among those in my same position is balanced.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am confident my back-up can do my work when I'm on vacation or out of the office.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**19. Please rate the level of supervision you are currently experiencing. \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Too much
- ☐ Somewhat too much
- ☐ About the right amount
- ☐ Somewhat too little
- ☐ Too little
- ☐ Prefer not to respond

20. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rank yourself in the following skills: \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Prefer not to respond	Not Applicable
Ability to handle pressure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organizational skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Problem solving skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to multitask and prioritize	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Math and budgeting proficiency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attention to detail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continuous learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge of rules and regulations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Do you have any other issues/concerns/comments you'd like to raise? \*

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Stop filling out this form.

## Division Research Administrators

22. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of these: \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to respond
My unit feels supported during time-sensitive deadlines or peak periods.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge sharing among R&E units has led to streamlined business practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
RBA implementation has decreased my workload.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am comfortable with the amount of direct reports I manage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My unit knows they can trust me as their manager.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. **How challenging was the process of implementing the RBA role?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Extremely challenging
- ☐ Very challenging
- ☐ Moderately challenging
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Slightly challenging
- ☐ Not at all challenging
- ☐ Prefer not to respond

24. **Please rate how satisfied you are with the efficacy of the RBA role implementation. \***

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely satisfied

25. **Do you have any other issues/concerns/comments you'd like to raise? \***

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## **Curriculum Vitae**

Jacqueline Dimas Godoy is a graduate of the Master of Science Research Administration program at Johns Hopkins University where she specialized in program administration and facilitation and financial management of sponsored programs. She currently works as a Research Business Administrator for the Department of Research and Evaluation within Kaiser Permanente, Southern California. She supports scientists in the Division of Epidemiologic Research. In her previous 4 years in research administration, she has worked at the University of California, Los Angeles as both a central and departmental research administrator. She began her research administration career in San Diego, California, at the Veteran's Medical Research Foundation, where she developed her love for research administration and the missions that the research supports. She is an avid traveler and fitness enthusiast.